STATE OF TENNESSEE

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T.R.A. DOCKET ROOM

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CORDELL HULL AND JOHN SEVIER STATE OFFICE BUILDINGS

TELEPHONE 615-741-3491 FACSIMILE 615-741-2009

November 6, 2003

Kim Beals, Esq. Hearing Officer Tennessee Regulatory Authority 460 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, Tennessee 37243

RE: PETITION OF CHATTANOOGA GAS COMPANY, NASHVILLE GAS COMPANY, A DIVISION OF PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS COMPANY, INC., ATMOS ENERGY CORPORATION FOR A DECLARATORY RULING REGARDING THE COLLECTIBILITY OF THE GAS COST PORTION OF UNCOLLECTIBLE ACCOUNTS UNDER THE PURCHASED GAS ADJUSTMENT ("PGA") RULES Docket No. 03-00209

Dear Ms. Beals:

Pursuant to your Order Granting in Part the Request to Take Officer Notice Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-5-313, enclosed please find the following documents you requested for filing:

- 1. CAD Exhibits dated September 19, 1997. In re Petition of Chattanooga Gas Company to Place Into Effect a Revised Natural Gas Tariff, Docket No. 97-00982.
- 2. Dan McCormac Direct Testimony & CAPD Joint Exhibit, Schedule 11 dated August 18, 2003, In re Application of Nashville Gas Company, A Division of Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. for an Adjustment of its Rates and Charges for Approval of Revised Tariffs and Approval of Revised Service Regulations, Docket No. 03-00313.
- 3. CAPD Direct Testimony Exhibits dated September 25, 1995, In re Petition of United Cities Gas Company, a Division of Atmos Energy Corporation to Place into Effect Revised Tariff Sheets, Docket No. 95-02258.

By copy of this letter, we are serving all parties of record. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (615) 532-3382. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Shilina B. Chatterjee

Assistant Attorney General

70252

(615) 532-3382

Enclosures

cc: All Parties of Record

ATTACHMENT NUMBER 1

TRA #97-00982 CA Exhibit Schedule 14

Chattanooga Gas Company Revenue Conversion Factor For the 12 Months Ending September 30, 1998

Line No.		•	
1	Operating Revenues	Amount	Balance
2	Forfeited Discounts	0.000007	1.000000
3	Balance	0.006837	0.006837
4	Uncollectible Ratio		1.006837
	The state of the s	0.001952	0 001965
5	Balance		1.004070
6	State Excise Tax	0.000000	1.004872
7	Balance	0 060000	0 060292
8			0 944579
· ·	Federal Income Tax	0 350000	0 330603
9	Balance		
			0.613977
10	Revenue Conversion Factor (Line 1 / Line 9)		
			1 628727

ATTACHMENT NUMBER 2

STATE OF TENNESSEE

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Office of the Attorney General

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T.R.A. DOCKET ROOM

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Reply to:
Consumer Advocate and Protection Division
Post Office Box 20207
Nashville, TN 37202

August 18, 2003

Honorable Deborah Taylor Tate Chairman Tennessee Regulatory Authority 460 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, Tennessee 37243

ANDY D. BENNETT

LUCY HONEY HAYNES

ASSOCIATE CHIEF DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

CHIEF DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

RE: APPLICATION OF NASHVILLE GAS COMPANY, A DIVISION OF PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS COMPANY, INC. FOR AN ADJUSTMENT OF ITS RATES AND CHARGES, FOR APPROVAL OF REVISED TARIFFS AND APPROVAL OF REVISED SERVICE REGULATIONS, Docket 03-00313

Dear Chairman Tate:

Enclosed is an original and thirteen copies of the Consumer Advocate's Direct Testimony of Dan McCormac. Also enclosed is a Joint Exibit of the CAPD staff. Kindly file same in this docket. Copies are being sent to all parties of record. If you have any questions, kindly contact me at (615) 741-8700. Thank you.

Sincerei

Timothy C. Phillips

Assistant Attorney General

Enclosures

cc: All Parties of Record

#67856

1	Q.	Would	you state	your name	for the	record,	please?
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- 2 A. My name is Daniel W. McCormac.
- Q. By whom are you employed, Mr. McCormac, and what is your position?
- 5 A. I am employed by the Attorney General's Office as Coordinator of 6 Analysts for the Consumer Advocate & Protection Division.
- Q. What is your educational background and what degrees andlicenses do you hold?
- 9 A. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from David
 10 Lipscomb College and I am a licensed Certified Public Accountant
 11 in the State of Tennessee.
- 12 Q. What is your experience in the field of ratemaking and 13 regulatory accounting?
- I have 27 years of experience in the field of utility ratemaking and 14 Α. regulatory accounting including two and one-half years with the 15 16 Certified Public Accounting firm of Wilson, Work, Fossett & Green as the supervisor in the utility consulting segment. I served 17 18 sixteen years with the Tennessee Public Service Commission. 19 including one year as Technical Assistant to the Commissioners. 20 I have served seven years with the Office of the Attorney General 21 and two years as Chief of Energy and Water at the Tennessee 22 Regulatory Authority (TRA). While employed by the Commission

and the Attorney General's Office, I supervised the preparation of many utility rate cases and earnings reviews. As part of these investigations, we developed financial exhibits to present to the Commission or TRA. These investigations supplied evidence to the TRA to enable it to set just and reasonable rates for utility services. In addition, I participated in various special studies and helped in other cases in which I did not testify.

As the Technical Assistant to the Commissioners I observed hearings and analyzed the issues in each case from a technical perspective. I responded to the Commissioner's requests for expert assistance in evaluating and interpreting the financial evidence in the record. I also provided and checked calculations based on that evidence. In each position, my responsibilities have included making decisions on whether the information provided was adequate and suitable for deciding the questions presented.

My duties with the Consumer Advocate & Protection Division (CAPD) are similar, but also include the review of various tariffs filed before the TRA. I assist in the decision making process as to whether the terms and conditions of the numerous filings are

just and reasonable or whether additional evidence is needed to support the filings. When significant consumer interests appear to be in jeopardy, we investigate further and provide expert testimony before the TRA when needed.

Q. What expertise do you have related to the natural gasindustry?

A. Since 1976 I have been involved in auditing gas companies, reviewing testimony, tariffs and exhibits, negotiating rates, and preparing testimony and exhibits relating to various revenue, expense, and rate base issues of all major Tennessee gas distribution companies. I have prepared testimony in every major case involving a gas utility since my employment with the Attorney General's office in 1994.

14 Q. What is your assignment in this docket?

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I reviewed the projected revenues under the current rates as approved by the TRA in Docket No. 99-00994 in an order dated July 18, 2000. These base rates have been in effect since July 1, 2000 but have been adjusted by various Purchased Gas Adjustment factors, Gas Supply Realignment cost surcharges, and Incentive Plan reward surcharges. I reviewed the projected revenues under the Company's proposed rates, the forfeited discounts and uncollectible accounts ratios in the revenue

conversion factor, and the cost of gas projection. I supervised the review of Nashville Gas Company's (NGC) projected expenses for the attrition year ending October 31, 2004. I also supervised the review of the projected investments made to provide utility service in Tennessee, commonly referred to as the "rate base." In addition, I reviewed the proposed changes in tariffs and rate design. I will explain all adjustments to rate base and revenues and the associated changes to investments or expenses. I will also present an overview of the CAPD's analysis and present our recommended rate design.

11 Q. How are the investments, revenues and expenses determined 12 in the CAPD's analysis?

13 A. We analyze the reported financials, variances from previous 14 years, and recent trends to obtain a reasonable estimate of these 15 elements for the twelve months ending October 31, 2004.

16 Q. Are these projections a reasonable basis for setting rates?

A. Yes. The accepted and proven standard used to set rates is to properly match revenues, expenses, and investment. The use of a reasonably anticipated and properly matched capital structure, revenues, investments, and costs assures NGC's investors a reasonable opportunity to earn a reasonable return on those investments.

Q. What were the conclusions from the Consumer Advocate's analysis?

We conclude that Nashville Gas Company's existing rates should be increased by about \$1,900,000. The results of the Consumer Advocate's analysis are presented in Exhibit CAPD and Exhibit CAPD-SB. The cost of service is summarized on Schedule 1 of Exhibit CAPD. Rates should be calculated on a Rate Base of \$258,662,000, an Operating Income at Present Rates of \$15,671,000 and a gross revenue conversion factor of 1.640709 as shown on CAPD Exhibit, Schedule 1. Rates should be increased to produce a fair rate of return of 6.5%.

Α.

Mr. Michael Chrysler will testify on the Company's proposed new incentive compensation plan and the Company's proposal to obtain funding directly from consumers for certain research and development costs. Mr. Mark Crocker will testify on other expenses and taxes. Dr. Stephen Brown will testify on the appropriate capital structure, cost of common equity, and return on rate base as summarized on CAPD Exhibit, Schedule 12 and supported in detail in Exhibit CAPD-SB.

- Q. Do you propose any major adjustments or corrections to the revenue projections or cost of gas presented by Nashville Gas Company?
- 22 A. Yes. First, I have eliminated the cost of gas from the cost of

- service as shown on Schedule 6. I have also adjusted for certain effects of a significant decline in the wholesale cost of gas since the Company prepared its case.
- Q. Please define gas costs and explain how NGC recovers these
 costs.
- Gas costs include the commodity cost of gas, storage costs and 6 Α. the cost to transport the gas from producers to local gas 7 distribution companies (LDCs). Tennessee's LDC's are protected 8 from most of the risks associated with increases in the cost of gas purchased to supply the needs of consumers. Any price changes 10 are passed to consumers under TRA Rule 1220-4-7 which allows 11 the LDC to adjust the billing rate to keep pace with changes in 12 gas costs. The rule is intended to keep the Company's gross 13 profit stable by preventing the under collection or over collection 14 of gas costs. 15
- 16 Q. Please explain the base rate component of a customer's bill.

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A. The most relevant factor in setting rates for Nashville Gas Company is the base rate. This rate is essentially the gross profit margin. The base rate or gross profit represents the difference between the total charges billed to consumers and the actual cost of gas. The base rate and other service charges should cover all just and reasonable operating expenses (other than gas costs),

1	and taxes with sufficient residual to allow an adequate return or
2	the Company's rate base.

- 3 Q. How is the base rate component designed?
- A. Base rates are designed to cover NGC's total costs and profit requirements in a normal year.
- 6 Q. How are rates adjusted to compensate for abnormal weather?
- A. The Weather Normalization Adjustment (WNA) allows LDCs to adjust base rates to compensate for abnormal weather. For example, if weather is colder than normal, rates are reduced to compensate for anticipated increases in sales. And if weather is warmer than normal, rates are automatically raised to compensate for anticipated decreases in sales.
- Q. Do you have an opinion concerning the cost of service study
 presented by the Company to support a larger rate increase
 for residential customers?
- 17 A. Yes. The cost of service study presented by the Company is only
 18 one method of computing costs and the cost of service approach
 19 is only one method of setting rates. There are other methods of
 20 calculating cost and other theories for setting rates.
- Q. Do cost of service studies provide the best guidance on how to set rates?

A. No. The results may provide general guidelines in calculating costs under certain assumptions, but should only be used as a rough test of the overall reasonableness of the rate design.

Page 3 of Mr. Fleenor's testimony states that, "cost of service studies are intended only to indicate general and relative levels of profitability." He also states: "Because cost of service studies are based upon various assumptions and subjective evaluations, the resulting returns are only indicative and not definitive." Since the decision before the TRA is to find specific just and reasonable rates, a "general and relative level . . ." study presents only part of the evidence.

In previous cases, NGC's cost of service estimates were based on the "zero or minimum size main theory." However, page 22 of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Gas Distribution Rate Design Manual also states that the "zero or minimum size main theory" is "controversial." For example, if only one assumption is changed (the main and service cost allocation method), the results of the cost study would change remarkably. The results of any cost of service study are relative to the assumptions used in preparing the study.

Page 30 of the manual states that	Page 3	of the	manual	states	that:
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A cost of service study is a series of choices regarding potentially **controversial** methods of identifying and allocating costs incurred by a utility. This illustrative study represents one possible means of computing class cost of service. **There are other equally correct methods**. (Emphasis added)

In addition, Page 57 states:

Gas rate design is **not an abstract application of economic principles**, but rather a practical exercise which affects customers in their daily lives. The rate designer should be aware that people need affordable gas to heat their homes and businesses need energy supplies which enable them to remain competitive. The rate designer should be sympathetic to these concerns while continuing to follow the basic rate design principles. (Emphasis added)

The cost of service study presented by the Company is an abstract application of economic principles, but it would not be practical to apply literally in setting just and reasonable rates. NGC did not file details supporting its estimation of the allocation of the cost of service in this case. However, such estimates are irrelevant because the current value of service analysis clearly shows that residential rates are already high.

- Q. What important factors should be considered in setting rates?
- 27 A. I agree with the statement on page 9 of the NARUC "Gas 28 Distribution Rate Design Manual":

"Utility ratemaking has never been an exact science. The rate structure for a utility should normally be designed to recover the total allowed revenue requirement of the utility, including a fair rate of While cost is an important factor in return. ratemaking, actual rates are often designed to incorporate numerous other factors, including technological. economic, regulatory, political. promotional and social."

Chapter 3 of the Manual is devoted to the discussion of another theory for setting rates called "value of service." Page 61 states,

"Setting rates based on value of service bears little relationship to setting them based on cost of service.

. . . When using value of service principles, we normally look . . . to the cost of alternatives available to the customer. Therefore, the value of service to 'heat only' customers would be the cost of a reasonably acceptable alternative means of providing heat."

At the current winter rates charged by NGC for "heat only" gas customers, consumers heating a home with natural gas will pay \$335 per year or 53% more than the cost to run an electric heat pump. (Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 14). This demonstrates that some current residential rates are 53% too high when measured by the "value of service" approach. This study is based on the same assumptions used by NGC in response to CAPD discovery request item 12 with the exception that the analysis has been corrected to include the effects of NGC's \$8 monthly customer service charge, Metro Nashville's 5.83% franchise fee surcharge,

and the 1% surcharge for NGC's incentive plan bonus.

The current disparity between electric and gas rates should concern the TRA and the Company. The potential loss of customers to alternative energy sources such as electricity would mean the loss of revenues which are contributing to fixed costs. This potential loss also concerns the Consumer Advocate and Protection Division. The loss of these customers would force other customers to pay the remaining fixed costs.

This point is validated by Mr. Fleenor's statement on page 4 of his testimony that "Value of service considerations rest on the premise that the value of a utility service to a consumer cannot be greater than the cost to that consumer of an equally satisfactory alternate service. Value of service is an important factor in designing and costing residential, commercial and industrial gas rates." Since residential rates are currently higher than a satisfactory alternate service, i.e., a heat pump, current residential rates are in fact priced **above** the value of service for some consumers.

Q. What are some other facts that indicate the unreasonableness of NGC's proposed rates?

A. While NGC's current rates for residential service are above the value of the service, NGC has proposed a 37% increase in residential service rates. (Schedule 13) In addition, NGC has proposed a 2% reduction for industrial customers. There is no evidence that the rates for industrial customers are above the value of service.

In fact, NGC claims that, "The industrial market is the most volatile and value responsive sector since gas often competes with other fuels on a daily or monthly basis" (Direct Testimony of Chuck Fleenor, Page 5). However, when we inquired as to how often the industrial customers switched to other alternatives, we were told that these customers have remained on the system as much as possible. NGC indicated that the only time these customers left the system in the last three years was for 24 days in January of 2001. That relatively brief interruption in service was caused by "supply or capacity" and "storage level" events, not by the relative cost of energy (CAPD Discovery Request No. 10).

- 19 Q. How expensive will gas heat be if NGC gets the rate increase 20 it has requested?
- A. Schedule 14a shows that gas heat could cost 79% more than heat provided from a heat pump. If gas costs stay close to

today's rates (a decrease of 13.8 cents per therm from the 66.8 1 cents shown in Exhibit CWF-2), gas rates will only be 60% higher 2 than heat pump rates as shown on Schedule 14b. 3 4

What is your recommendation for designing rates? Q.

The CAPD proposes that the deficiency in the projected cost of 5 Α. service be allocated as shown on Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 13. 6

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Using any reasonable analysis, the costs of operating a heat pump are now less than the costs of operating a gas furnace. Raising rates for residential consumers will only hinder efforts to retain NGC's current customer base. Nashville Gas Company's current residential rates are higher than the value of service. The CAPD does not find any conclusive evidence to support a disproportionate increase in residential rates at this time. We therefore request the TRA to avoid increasing NGC's service charges for residential and commercial consumers any more than absolutely necessary. To do so would not only cost consumers, but would also hurt the future of NGC.

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Another important factor in comparing NGC's rates to competitive rates is the fact that electric rates in North Carolina are 19% higher than Nashville Electric Service rates and rates in South

1	Carolina are 30% higher than Nashville Electric Service rates.
2	Therefore, what may be done in the Carolinas may not be
3	relevant in Tennessee. Since TVA power is much less expensive,
4	more attention must be paid to the potential impacts of alternative

Q. How much more will gas heat cost if the TRA adopts therates as proposed by the CAPD?

sources of heat in Tennessee.

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- 8 A. Schedule 14c shows that gas heat will cost 40% more than a heat pump. We certainly hope that the relatively high cost of gas will continue to decrease.
- 11 Q. What adjustments to the cost of service are being proposed?
- 12 A. I will explain four adjustments to the cost of service as projected
 13 by NGC for revenues, uncollectible expense, accumulated
 14 depreciation, and gas inventory. These adjustments also caused
 15 changes in forfeited discounts revenue, uncollectible expense,
 16 and working capital.
- 17 Q. Would you explain the revenue adjustment to correct for billing errors that occurred within the test year?
- 19 A. Yes. Certain billing errors were detected and corrected during the
 20 test year ending December 31, 2002. The correction of these
 21 errors is quantified in response to CAPD Request No. 36 which
 22 shows that sales and transportation volumes as corrected yield

about \$80,651 more revenues. These volumes were incorporated into Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 13. This adjustment **reduces** revenue requirements by about \$80,839.

Α.

The projected gross profit from base rates and service charges for NGC under current rates after this adjustment is about \$82,266,000 as shown on Line 1 of Schedule 6.

Q. Would you explain the adjustment to uncollectible expenses?

Yes. Uncollectible expenses were adjusted to include the total projected uncollectible expense for the attrition year. The total uncollectible expense ratio was computed by taking the total net write-offs for the last three calendar years as a ratio of gross revenues excluding transportation customers as shown on Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 11. This adjustment is based on the same data used by NGC as shown on page 47 of prefiled data item No. 25. The results are incorporated into the cost of service and revenue conversion factor as summarized in Exhibit CAPD, Schedules 8 and 11. This adjustment **increases** revenue requirements by about \$334,000 depending on the cost of capital variations caused by the lead lag adjustment of this item.

Q. Would you explain the adjustment to accumulated depreciation?

- A. Yes. NGC's calculation on page 125 of prefiled item No. 25 included a math error. The corrected formula for the April 30, 2003 balance in accumulated depreciation yields an increase of \$2,694,437 as included in Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 2. This adjustment **reduces** revenue requirements by about \$387,000 depending on the cost of capital variations caused by the lead lag adjustment of this item.
- Q. Would you explain the adjustment to Gas Inventories on
 Exhibit CAPD, Schedule 3?
- Yes. The projected gas inventories balance was reduced by 10 Α. \$4,697,742 to reflect the decrease in actual gas costs added to 11 12 inventory through June 2003 and market projections for the 13 attrition year as of July 2003. This calculation was prepared by NGC at our request to revise page 107 of prefile Data Request 14 #25. A similar adjustment was made to the cost of gas to reflect 15 16 the associated impacts on forfeited discounts revenues, 17 uncollectible expenses, and working capital requirements. These adjustments reduce the revenue requirements by about \$584,000 18 19 depending on the cost of capital variations caused by the lead lag 20 adjustment of this item.
- 21 Q. Does this conclude your pre-filed direct testimony?
- 22 A. Yes.

BEFORE THE TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY AT NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

IN RE:

APPLICATION OF NASHVILLE GAS COMPANY, A

DIVISION OF PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS COMPANY,

INC., FOR AN ADJUSTMENT OF ITS RATES AND

CHARGES, THE APPROVAL OF REVISED TARIFFS AND THE APPROVAL OF REVISED SERVICE REGULATIONS

DOCKET NO. 03-00313

AFFIDAVIT

I, Dan McCormac, Coordinator of Analysts, for the Consumer Advocate & Protection Division of the Attorney General's Office, hereby certify that the attached Direct Testimony represents my opinion in the above-referenced case and the opinion of the Consumer Advocate & Protection Division.

DAN MCCORMAC

Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of day of 2003.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires:

EXHIBIT CAPD

Nashville Gas Company Index to Exhibits For the 12 Months Ending October 31, 2004

Deputte of O	Exhibit No.
Results of Operations	1
Comparative Rate Base	2
Comparative Working Capital	3
Working Capital Expense Lag	4
Lead Lag Results	4
	5
Income Statement at Current Rates	6
Income Statement at Proposed Rates	7
Operation & Maintenance Expense	8
Taxes Other Than Income Taxes	9
Excise and Income Tax	
Revenue Conversion Factor	10
	11
Cost of Capital	12
Transportation Rates and Revenue Summary	13
Nashville Energy Prices	14

Nashville Gas Company Revenue Conversion Factor For the 12 Months Ending October 31, 2004

Line No.			
1	Operating Revenues	Amount	Balance 1.000000
2	Add: Forfeited Discounts	0.007435 A/	0.007435
3	Balance		1.007435
4	Uncollectible Ratio	0.004534 B/	0.004568
5	Balance		1.002867
6	State Excise Tax	0.065000 c/	0.065186
7	Balance		0.937681
8	Federal Income Tax	0.350000 c/	0.328188
9	Balance	_	0.609493
10	Revenue Conversion Factor (1 / Line 9)	=	1.640709

A/ Filing Guidelines Item 25, P. 42

B/ Filing Guidelines Item 25, P. 47 adjusted to include all uncollectibles (\$2,132,710 / \$470,411,854) per DWM-1

C/ Statutory rate

ATTACHMENT NUMBER 3

Atmos

95-02258 CA Exhibit Schedule 11

United Cities Gas Company Revenue Conversion Factor For the 12 Months Ending November 30, 1996

Line No	Operating Revenues	Amount	Balance 1.000000
2	Forfeited Discounts	0.004266	0 004266
3	Balance		1.004266
4	Uncollectible Ratio	0.001237	0.001242
5	Balance		1.003024
6	State Excise Tax	0.060000	0.060181
7	Balance		0.942842
8	Federal Income Tax	0.350000	0 329995
9	Balance		0.612847
10	Revenue Conversion Factor (Line 1 / Line 9)		1.631727